



# Social Networking Policy For Staff

Adopted and ratified by the <i>Governing Body</i> of on:	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2015
Policy to be reviewed on:	July 2017
As defined by the <i>AET Governance and Accountability Framework (ARCI)</i>  Accountability:	AET Board
Responsibility	ST

**Other Relevant Policies** e Safety Policy, Child Protection Policy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social networks are rapidly growing in popularity and used by all ages in society. The most popular social networks are web-based, commercial, and not purposely designed for educational use.

For individuals, social networking sites provide tremendous potential opportunities for staying in touch with friends and family. Other educational networking sites are also growing in use. These sites are usually restricted to only certain users and not available to the general public.

Examples of these types of sites include Facebook, Twitter, educational wikis, professional online communities, blogging sites and online applications such as Google Apps for Education.

As teachers and other school staff who work with children and young people we have a professional image to uphold, how we conduct ourselves online helps support this image. As reported recently by the media, there have been instances of teachers or other school staff who have worked with children and young people demonstrating professional misconduct. This has included engaging in inappropriate dialogue about their schools and/or students or posting pictures/videos of themselves engaged in inappropriate activity.

Some staff feel that being online shields them from having their personal lives examined. But increasingly, teachers' online identities are put into the public domain this can cause serious repercussions. One of the main features of social networks is the ability to "friends request" others.

We strongly discourage staff who work with children and young people from accepting invitations to 'friend' or 'follow' students within these social networking

sites. When students gain access into a teacher's network of friends and acquaintances and are able to view personal photos, the student-teacher dynamic is altered and indeed the teacher is entering into a one to one personal conversation with the student.

Friend-ing / following students provides these students more information than one should share in an educational setting. It is important to maintain a professional relationship with students to avoid relationships that could be inappropriate on one or more levels. This could also be the case with students who have moved on, either leaving the school to go to another or leaving full time education. The potential for these students to still have acquaintances with whom they could share personal information about the teacher which would put the teacher or other students at risk is high.

## 2. GUIDELINES

**For the protection of your professional reputation and to ensure that safeguarding protocols are maintained, we recommend the following practices:**

- Do not accept students as friends / followers on personal social networking sites. Decline any student-initiated friend / follow requests.
- Do not initiate digital friendships with students
- Remember that people classified as "friends" or "followers" have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- If you wish to use other social networking tools in the educational setting, please contact the AET Board / Executive for authorisation prior to setting up content.
- Do not post any content that could be deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libellous. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness as a professional at risk.
- Post only what you want the world to see. Imagine your students, their parents or your line manager visiting your site. It is not like posting something to your web site or blog and then realising that a story or photo should be

taken down. On a social networking site, once you post something it may be available, even after it is removed from the site.

- Do not discuss students or colleagues or publicly criticise school polices or personnel.
- Do not post images that include students and do not take any photographs of students on personal mobile phones or mobile devices.

## Security

- Visit your profile security and privacy settings. At a minimum, teachers should have all privacy settings set to "only friends" or "followers". "Friends of friends" and "Networks and Friends". You must set the privacy levels correctly as you and your family may be a risk from people you do not know looking at you, your home and your children.
- Due to security risks, be cautious when installing the external applications that work with the social networking site. Examples of these sites are calendar programs and games.
- Run updated malware protection to avoid infections of spyware and adware that social networking sites might place on your computer.
- Be careful not to fall for phishing scams that arrive via email or on your social network site, providing a link for you to click, leading to a fake login page.

If you require further information please ensure you seek guidance from your ICT Customer Services Team. It is important that all staff recognize the consequences of inappropriate use of social networking sites. These might include:

- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Referral to External Agencies, including the Police
- Intervention from the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB). The involvement of the ISB could result in a referral to the General Teaching Council (GTC).

Although this document is only guidance, it is strongly recommended that all staff adhere to the guidelines highlighted.